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Damon - An Address - 1843



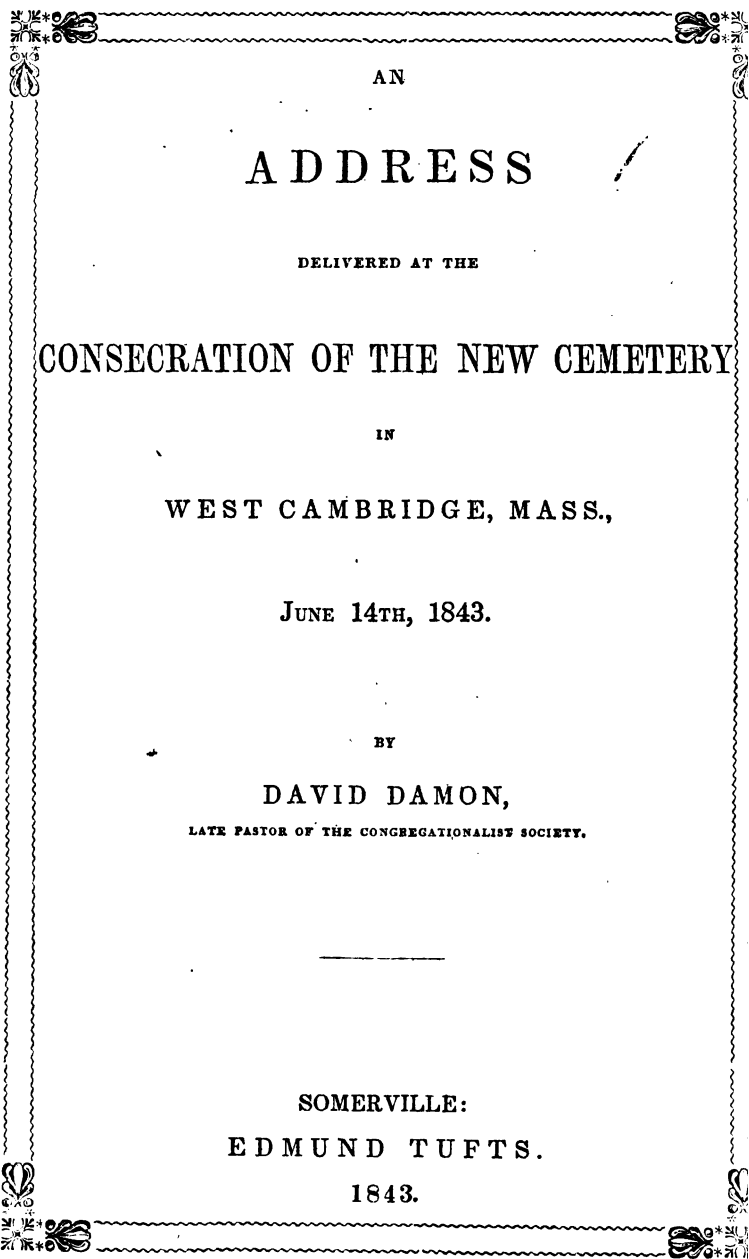
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AN

# ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

CONSECRATION OF THE NEW CEMETERY

IN

WEST CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,

JUNE 14TH, 1843.

BY

DAVID DAMON,

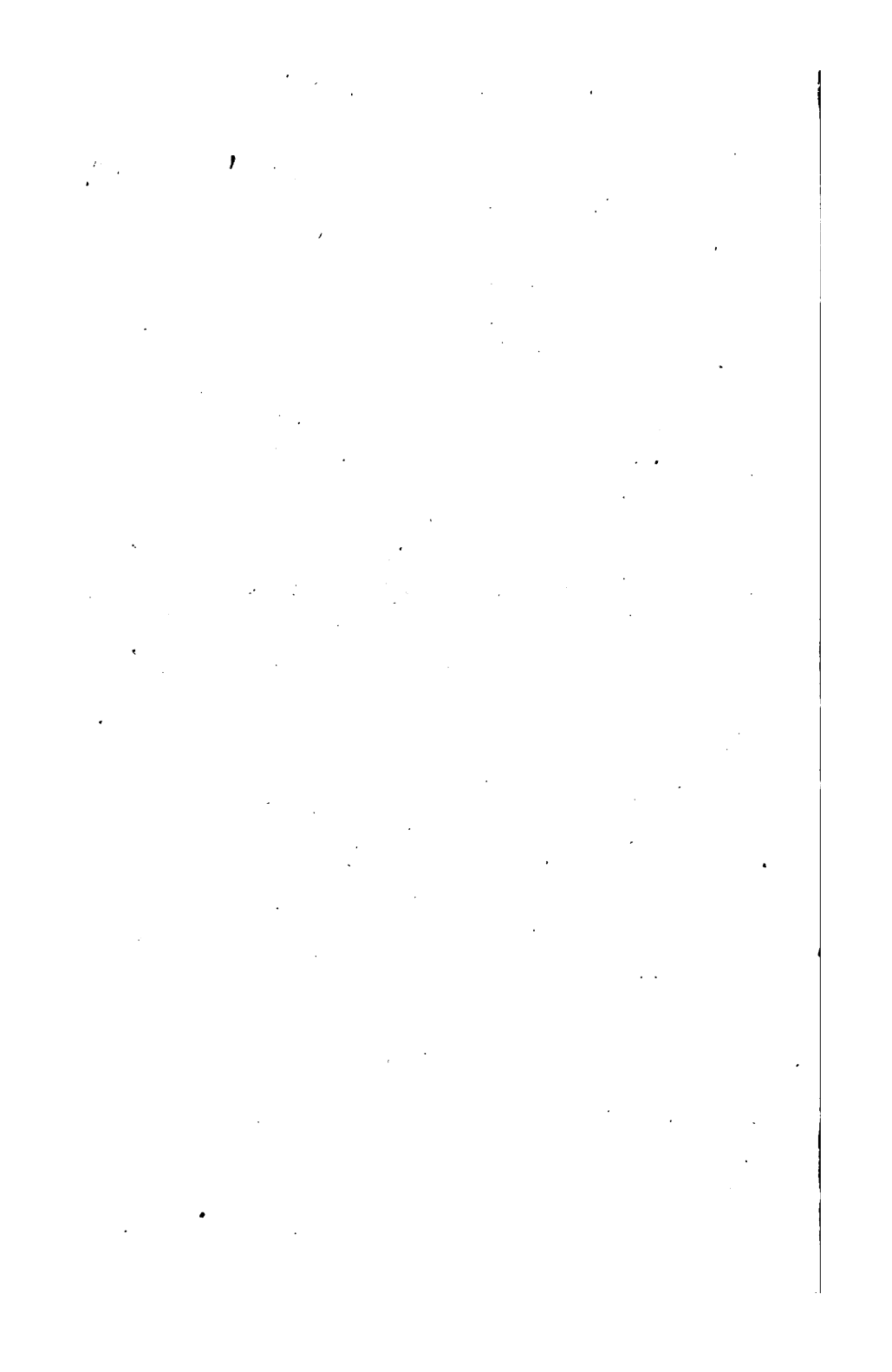
LATE PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONALIST SOCIETY.

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SOMERVILLE:

EDMUND TUFTS.

1843.



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### NOTE.

The following Address, the last production from the pen of the Rev. David Damon, was written "beforehand against the day of his burial." Nine days subsequent to its delivery he attended the funeral of the Hon. Edmund Parker, in Reading, Mass. He entered the pulpit apparently in good health, but at the close of the services was attacked with apoplexy. He was conveyed from the pulpit to the late residence of Mr. Parker where he died on Sunday morning, June 25th, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. He was the first to rest in the new Cemetery, at the consecration of which he had so recently assisted. His townsmen, — who have since strewed his grave with flowers, "and blessed the bed," — previous to his decease requested a copy of the Address for publication. With that request he intended to comply. It is now given as a last token of his regard for them until they shall re-join him in that "building from God, that house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens."

N. D.

WEST CAMBRIDGE, August 12th, 1843.

W

## ADDRESS.

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### CHRISTIAN FRIENDS :

We have come together on an occasion, which requires only the utterance, with all seriousness and simplicity, of the thoughts which are in every mind, and the emotions which must be felt by every heart. We have not to say what all *should* think, but what all *do* think, — what all *should* feel, but what all *do* feel. Here mind answers to mind, heart to heart. There is accordance, unison, mutuality of sentiment, and the sentiment of mutual interest and equality. There may be diversity, there cannot be opposition, of thought or feeling. All which the occasion requires, and all which befits it, is common, mutual, belongs to one category, pertains to man, as man.

We have come to set apart and devote this chosen ground, to be henceforth a receptacle and resting-place of the dead, — not to hallow, to consecrate, to make it sacred, — but simply to set it apart, — to announce its exclusive future adaptation and character. Whatever of sacredness we may at this time associate with it, must spring from the thought — The dead will be here ! Whatever of sacredness men shall hereafter associate with it, will spring from the thought — The dead are here ! Neither

we, nor those who shall come after us, can derive the feeling of sacredness and solemnity, and permanently attach it to the place, from the service which we now render. Our service may manifest, but cannot originate, a sentiment which belongs to the universal heart of humanity.

All nations, all descriptions of men venerate the dead. The catacombs of ancient Egypt, the *morais* in the sunny isles of the Pacific, Mount Auburn in young America, even the rudely pictured urn, hanging in the humble dwelling which death has visited, with a weeping willow, and a female form bending over it, all these are so many witnesses to the existence, and strength of action, of the universal sentiment. The burying-place was the centre of attraction in the Patriarch's nomadic circle ; and it is the last and dearest spot to which the affections of our aboriginal, mis-called savage, cling, when he is torn from his country and made to take up his march in the line of the setting sun. We find no essential difference between the ancients and the moderns, the barbarous and the civilized, the inhabitants of the city, and the dwellers on the hill-sides and in the remotest glens of the country, in their cherished and manifested reverence for the dead.

Of course there must be deep foundations in human nature for a sentiment so powerful and universal. It may be referred by the superficial thinker to imagination and superstition. But it should be remembered, that the pure imagination does not voluntarily wander beyond the domains of nature and truth, that it bodies forth things which should be and will be, if they are not already ; and that superstition, so much and often deprecated, is but another

name for the unenlightened and untrained action of the religious principle itself. Christianity, in teaching us the nature and destination of the soul, does not teach us to regard the material organization, with which it is associated, in the infancy of its being, as altogether worthless. Christianity allows, if it does not sanction, the natural spontaneous sentiments and yearnings of the human heart. They are none other than the sentiments and yearnings of the soul itself. Not only Mary, but Jesus also, wept at Lazarus's tomb. The ascending spirit imparts sanctity, in the view and estimate of the living, to the lifeless body, as if it might still come, and reassert its claim to it, as its own.

Seldom is there a voluntary lingering and musing in the place of graves, without imparting some purifying influence, some renovating impulse. Always the indulgence of the sentiments of veneration and affection for the dead, tends to make the hearts of the living better.

Man learns, in his contemplations in the resting-place of the dead, the essential equality and brotherhood of man. The rich man is brought from his marble dome, and the laborer from his cottage, to lie side by side, and one occupies as much length and breadth of God's Earth as the other. The beggar, from the highway, is brought next; and neither of the former occupants takes offence at his entrance upon the footing of equality. Man comes into the world in helplessness and nakedness; and of all which he acquires in it, he carries nothing with him to the grave. Whatever is still actually his own, goes with him to the world of spirits, where is but one and the same impartial tribunal, whence sen-

tence is pronounced upon the deeds done in the body.

Filial Reverence comes to the resting-place of the dead, first to record in enduring marble the virtues of the venerated and loved, and then to read over the record and meditate upon the monitions it gives, and the recollections it calls up. Here the man, in the maturity of his strength and wisdom, actively engaged in the duties of life, oppressed by its burdens and cares, flushed with the riches and honors of the world, or satiated with, and sick of such unsatisfying perishable things, — corrupted, it may be, by the world's influence, or penitent and seeking for the restoration of lost peace, — here is he carried back, in memory and imagination, to the days of childhood, innocence, and unalloyed enjoyment. The image of his father is presented to his mind's-eye, as he was in those first-remembered days, and, by his side, (an helpmeet indeed,) the image of the blended wisdom and carefulness and never slumbering affection of his mother. He remembers their advice, which he may not have followed ; their Christian example, which he may not have copied ; their warnings of moral dangers, which he has not shunned ; and follows in the path in which recollection leads him till he arrives at the concluding scenes in which they departed in the triumphs of Christian faith and hope ; and he withdraws from the hallowed place, and his contemplations in it, an altered and better man.

Grief comes also to the place of deposit of the most precious of all relics, to open its treasure-house of tears, and find, at least, a temporary and partial relief, in pouring them out where they may flow

freely. In the midst of daily cares which are inevitable, and duties which yet must be done because they are duties, and the obtrusive observances of the world which cannot be wholly shunned nor shut out, the inward struggling of the mourner's grief would sometimes be overwhelming, if the hour of retirement and prayer did not intervene, or it were not permitted to follow with Mary, to weep where she wept.

Fond Affection, Grief's fairer and healthier sister, comes hither with her, and often she tarries longer, and comes again and again, years after grief has parted with all its tears, and has ceased to be grief. What can ever prevent, what should ever prevent, the endeavour of fond affection to be near its object? But the spirit of the loved child, or brother, or sister, or friend dearer than brother, or sister, has departed. It no more answers perceptibly to the calls to which all its faculties used to be continually and joyfully alive. What remains, but to follow where the shrine in which it was inclosed, was last seen and deposited, as if the spirit still hovered round its vacated tenement, and were pleased with and accepted the decorations and honors bestowed upon that as done to itself? Who would chide away Rizpah from watching, with mingled grief and affection, by the lifeless remains of her sons, and not rather, like David, sympathize with the feeling and do it reverence? So when the mother comes to water with her tears the flowers which she has planted upon the grave of her darling child, it is a spectacle at which angels might weep in sympathy, were it not that the presence of the ascended spirit of the innocent with themselves, now also as they are, a ministering spirit

before the Father's throne of love, must turn the tears of sympathetic grief into tears of joy.

Is it to be supposed, that the indulgence and manifestation of all these thoughts and emotions can profit nothing, — avail nothing? Let it never be doubted, that such offices and offerings of fond affection tend to humanize humanity itself, to soften, to purify, to elevate man's heart ; to secure to the living an increased amount of reciprocal affection and attention ; to strengthen and deepen even a mother's love for the children whom death has yet spared. Let it not be supposed for a moment, that what has been done and is contemplated, in regard to this spacious and beautiful Cemetery, shall be in vain as it respects the highest humane, Christian, and spiritual interests of all who dwell in the vicinity and town. Rather let us confidently expect that what has been done, what we now do, and what is to *be* done here, on *this* ground, shall contribute something, in addition to the motives already in operation, to rescue our more ancient Cemetery, dear to the hearts of so many of the living, and in which so many of the fathers sleep, from the appearance of cold neglect which it has too long exhibited. Then shall both, that and this, the resting-place of the fathers, and the resting-place of the sons and successors of the fathers, alternately and together, not divide and confound, but mutually share and heighten our veneration, and contribute to our attainment and progress in all which the believing Christian heart lives for and longs for.

Here, also, following in the train of grief and fond affection mingled with grief, come Christian faith and hope, to impart to the stricken mourner's breast,

the consolation it needs most, and the highest consolation it can receive. I do not say that the tokens and mementos of death and dissolution are of themselves adapted to inspire consolation and hope. But I say where death has been, or has left the desolating marks of his footsteps, there it is that Christian faith and hope are surest to follow, to do their own restorative and more blessed work. It was an equally interesting characteristic in Jacob's vision of the ladder that its foot was firmly planted on the earth, as it was that its top reached to heaven; and if the vision should be repeated to any of us, the effort of our dream would be to reach its foot that we might begin the ascent towards the glory and felicity above its top. So it is the perfection of truly Christian faith and hope, that they extend downward to the lowest depths of human affliction and despair, as well as transcend in their upward towering, all previous thoughts of the hearts which they enter. Here then let us resort in the dark day of bereavement and sorrow, as well as in the sunshine of temporary prosperity. Here we shall find the greatest contrasts,—not only spectacles of the lowest depths, but visions, glimpses at least, of the greatest heights,—not only the tomb, but Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, before the tomb. What so beautiful thought was ever so beautifully expressed as that which is contained in these few simple words? “Thy brother shall rise again.” What object can faith ever embrace large enough to fill and satisfy the soul, save that which is presented in that other declaration of Him who brought life and immortality to light in His gospel? — “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” And both these declarations,



be it remembered, were uttered, when Jesus and the loved sisters, were, in thought, already at the tomb of Lazarus, whither they immediately went, and witnessed the beginning of their fulfilment. Here then we find the beginning and end, the sum and result of human contemplation, when, in the depths of the soul, and surrounded by the objects most adapted to the solemnity of our spiritual frame, we agitate the questions — Whence are we, and whither do we go? Our bodies are taken from the dust, and the dust returns to earth as it was; but this is not the end. We begin with the dissoluble and corruptible, but rise to the indissoluble and incorruptible. We begin, in our contemplations, with thoughts of sin, dishonor, weakness, grief, anguish, death; but we end with the thought, and not only the thought, but with the *assurance*, of glory and honor and immortality. Good then may it be for us that we have come together here. Good may it be for us when we shall come often hereafter, and return to our homes, and the world, and our avocations, to carry into practical effect, the impulses imparted by the Holy Spirit while we were here, and then hasten to come again — till we shall be unconsciously borne here for the last time and left.

Permit me now to end with a few verses composed and written immediately before the address, but adapted to its close, inasmuch as the address is only an expansion of the sentiments of the verses, and these consequently an epitome of the Address.

WHEN the freed spirit wings its way  
 Above this scene of mortal pain,  
 Here earth to earth shall be consigned,  
 That dust may turn to dust again.

This chosen ground we set apart  
 For wearied nature's place of rest,  
 Earth's children here shall find repose  
 Like children on their mother's breast.

Here filial reverence and love  
 Shall come to spend the pensive hour ;  
 Here fond affection's hand shall plant  
 Full many a choice and fragrant flower.

Here grief shall come at early dawn,  
 To ope' its treasure-house of tears ;  
 And come again at evening tide,  
 To sigh forth all it feels and fears.

Here faith and hope shall also come,  
 'Midst death's proud trophies, fearless stand ;  
 And raise the stricken mourner's heart  
 To the joy-beaming spirit land :

The land where death strives not with life ;  
 (While some must fall and some must moan ;)   
 But all shall know that all is past,  
 Save life, Eternal Life, alone.

THE FOLLOWING HYMNS WERE WRITTEN FOR THE OCCASION.

BY REV. J. C. WALDO.

THIS is, O God ! a weary world,  
 And oft of joy 't is all unblest ;  
 Yet thanks to thee, that thou hast found  
 On earth for man, *one* place of rest.

No sculptured dome we come to raise,  
 No temple here to consecrate ;  
 A resting-place for nature's mould,  
 To thee we humbly dedicate.

When mourners hither bend their way,  
 To bury what thy love had given,  
 As here in tears they leave the clay,  
 Teach them the treasure is in heaven.

Let nature here unfold her charms,  
And shed around her early bloom ;  
With joyous smiles her incense spread,  
To cheer and beautify the tomb.

Then fear be banished from this place ;  
Bid superstition's spectre fly ;  
And let the ENTRANCE be inscribed —  
" IT IS A BLESSED THING TO DIE."

We pass from spring to summer's heat  
And autumn mild to winter's cold,  
Nor fear these changes all to meet,  
For all the Maker's love unfold.

Thus as we pass from infancy  
To youth, to manhood, and decay,  
These changes wherefore should we dread ?  
For these as much His love display.

So if we bring the aged sire,  
The smiling babe, the blooming youth,  
Or ripened manhood, here to rest, —  
They rest in "*Friendship, Love, and Truth.*"

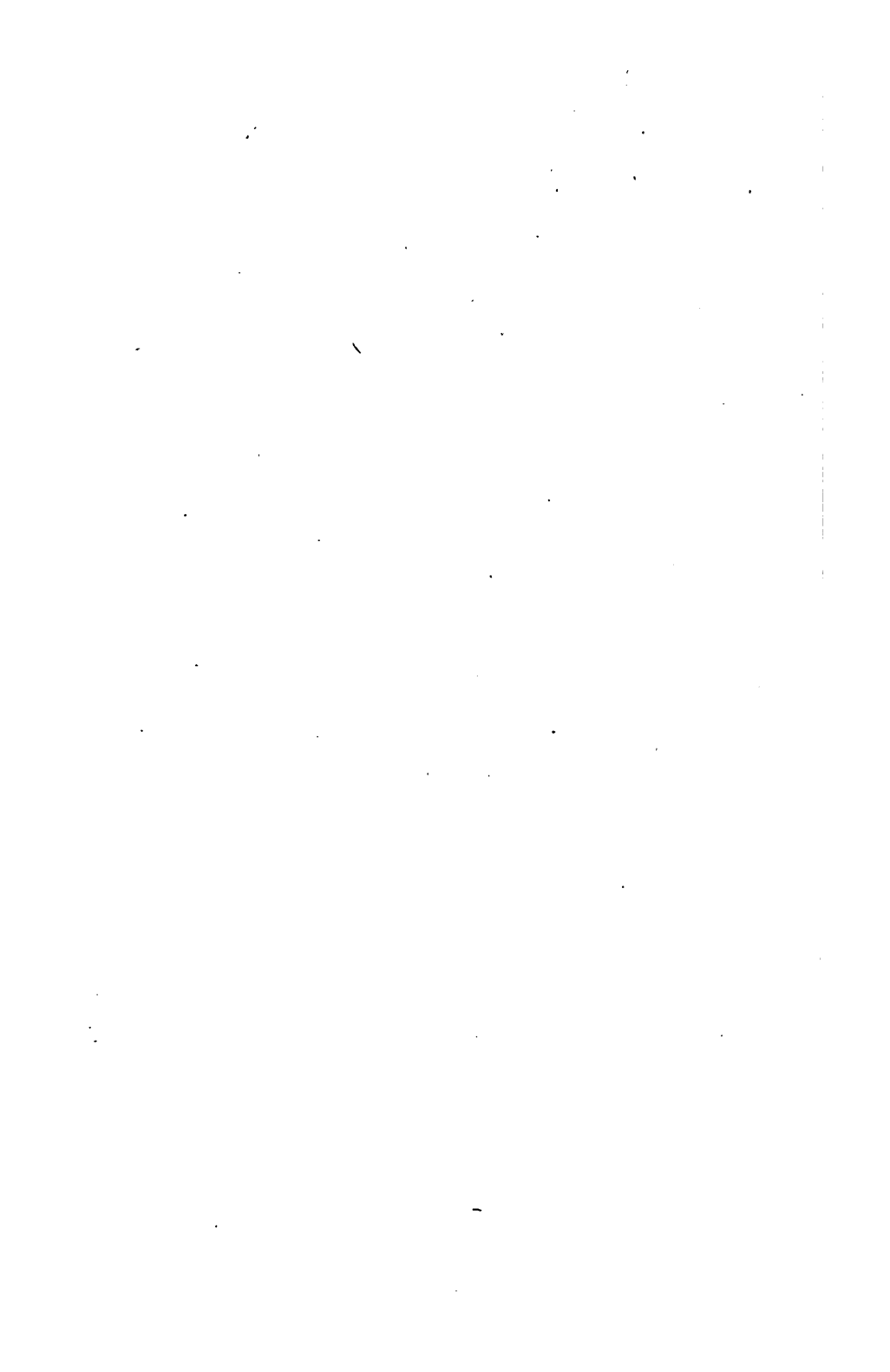
And when at length our God shall give  
The summons of his grace and love,  
That brings our bodies here to rest,  
Our spirits we will rest above.

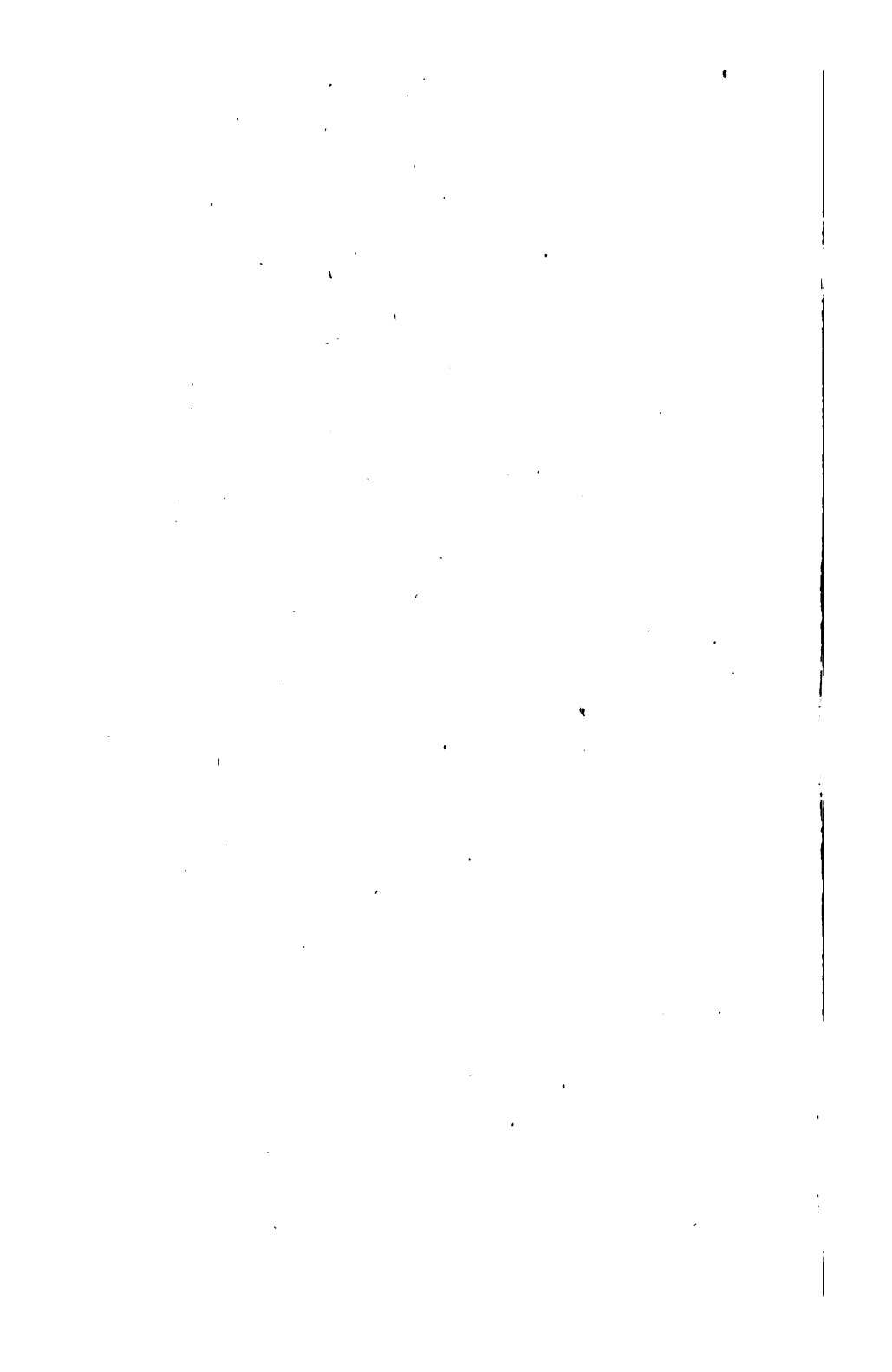
BY MRS. E. A. WHITTEMORE.

With the words of solemn prayer,  
And the voices of the psalm ;  
With our hearts estranged from care  
And our feelings hushed and calm ;  
With a firm, confiding hope  
Of a resurrection day,  
We now *consecrate* this spot,  
Where the loved and dead may lay.

Here we will fair blossoms bring,  
And we'll plant the graceful trees,  
That shall, low whispering, sing  
Soothing requiems to the breeze ;  
And the mourner here will stray,  
Oft to meditate at even,  
Till the place, indeed, becomes  
As the very "gate of Heaven !"

Lo ! the grave is not our home,  
Veiled in dark and hopeless gloom ;  
To the Christian, *light* has shone  
From his Saviour's garden tomb ;  
It reveals him risen on high,  
And to faith, assurance gives,  
That our "flesh may rest in hope,"  
For the dear Redeemer lives.









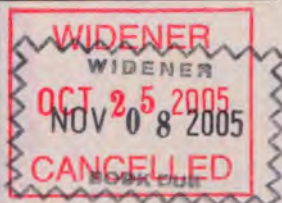


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